

## Lesson 2 – Visual Impairment



### Lesson Overview

*Changes in vision occur as we age. About 65% of all people who are visually impaired worldwide are aged 50 and older. In this lesson, participants will experience a variety of age-related visual impairments to sensitize them to the challenges that visual loss has on the daily life of older adults.*

### Lesson Objectives

After completing this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Define and recognize a series of common age-related visual impairments and conditions
- Experience a series of age-related visual impairments and conditions
- Increase sensitivity to the feelings engendered when vision is impaired and independence may be compromised

### Lesson at a Glance

Activity	Materials	Preparation	Approximate class time
FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Visual Impairment Experiences Chart</i></li> <li>• PowerPoint Presentations Slides 4-11</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Print/photocopy the <i>Visual Impairment Experiences Chart</i> – one for each participant</li> <li>2. Prepare to show Presentation Slides 4-11</li> </ol>	15 minutes
LEARN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Visual Impairment Experiences Chart</i></li> <li>• Visual Impairment Simulation Glasses</li> <li>• Props for simulation tasks – book, button-down shirt, pill bottle, phone, pen and paper</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find the props for simulation tasks</li> </ol>	30-45 minutes
REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Visual Impairment Experiences Chart</i></li> </ul>	None	10-15 minutes

## Lesson 2 – Visual Impairment

# FOCUS: Common Visual Impairments Experienced by Older Adults

15 minutes

### Purpose:

There are several types of visual impairments that older adults may experience as they age. Participants will be introduced to six different conditions and the impact each has on sight.

### Materials:

- *Visual Impairment Experience Chart*
- Presentation Slides 4-11

### Facilitation Steps:

1. Share this statistic with the participants:
  - About 65% of all people who are visually impaired are aged 50 and older, while this age group comprises about 20% of the population. With increasing elderly population in many countries, more people will be at risk of visual impairment due to chronic eye diseases and aging processes.
  - 82% of people living with blindness are aged 50 and above.<sup>2</sup>

2. The cost of vision problems is significant, both to the individual and society at large.

A majority of costs (55%) are incurred by the 65 and older age group. The total economic burden of eye disorders among the U.S. population is estimated to be \$138 billion per year.<sup>3</sup> Show the PowerPoint Slides 4 and 5 with the economic burden estimated by cost category and age group in million.

3. Give participants the *Visual Impairment Experience Chart*. Tell participants that there are six visual impairment conditions

that they will be learning about. As you discuss each condition, they should take notes on their chart handout.

4. Show Presentation Slides 6-11.

- **Glaucoma** - is the name for a group of eye diseases that damage the optic nerve, which carries information from the eye to the brain. When the nerve is damaged, you can lose your vision. **Impact:** You slowly lose peripheral or side vision first. Thereafter, central vision may decrease.<sup>4</sup>
- **Macular Degeneration** – is the leading cause of severe vision loss in people over age 60. It occurs when the small central portion of the retina, known as the macula, deteriorates. **Impact:** Dark, blurry areas in the center of vision<sup>4</sup>
- **Cataracts** - is a painless, cloudy area in the lens of the eye that blocks the passage of light to the retina. **Impact:** cloudy, fuzzy, or foggy vision<sup>4</sup>
- **Diabetic Retinopathy** - is a disease of the retina which is the most common diabetes-related eye condition. **Impact:** Damage to the retina leading to poor vision and/or blindness<sup>4</sup>
- **Retinal Detachment** - When part or all of the retina comes off (detaches from) the back of the eye. **Impact:** floaters and flashes of light can be warning signs. Also sudden loss of peripheral vision can be a sign.<sup>4</sup>
- **Retinitis Pigmentosa** – is progressive degeneration of the retina, the light

sensitive membrane that coats the inside of the eyes.

**Impact:** Peripheral (or side) vision gradually decreases and eventually is lost in most cases. Central vision is usually preserved until late in these conditions. <sup>4</sup>



## Visual Impairment Experience Chart

Use this organizer to take notes on each of the visual impairments. Also, add comments on your experience after you participate in the simulation exercise.

Visual Impairment	Impact on Vision	How I Felt	How would this impact my daily life as an older adult?
Glaucoma			
Macular Degeneration			
Cataracts			
Diabetic Retinopathy			
Retinal Detachment			
Retinitis Pigmentosa			



## Lesson 2 – Visual Impairment

# LEARN: Visual Impairment Simulation Experience

30-45 minutes

### Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to have participants experience a variety of common age-related visual impairments. Participants will gain a greater sensitivity and empathy for the impact that visual impairments have on the daily life of older adults.

### Materials:

- *Visual Impairment Experience Chart*
- Visual Impairment Simulation Glasses
- Props for simulation exercise tasks – book, button-down shirt, pill bottle, phone, pen and paper

### Facilitation Steps:

1. Divide the class into five or six groups. Give each of the small groups one of the visual impairment simulation glasses. In their small groups, participants will each try on the simulation glasses and do some of the following tasks:
  - Read a page out of a book
  - Button a shirt
  - Open a pill bottle
  - Dial a phone
  - Write a grocery list

You can also add some of your own ideas for experiencing visual impairment while performing daily tasks.

2. After each person in your group has an opportunity to try on the simulation glasses, take notes on the Visual Impairment Experience Chart in the “How I Felt” column.
3. Have each group keep passing along the various Visual Impairment Simulation Glasses so that all participants have the opportunity to try on each pair and do the tasks. Participants should complete the “How I Felt” column after each simulation experience.



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### REVIEW: Reflection

10-15 minutes

**Purpose:**

Participants will reflect on the visual impairment simulation experience and consider how it would impact their daily life as an older adult.

Psychologically, it can also lead to depression, irritability, social isolation, and loss of memory.<sup>5</sup>

**Materials:**

- *Visual Impairment Experience Chart*

**Facilitation Steps:**

1. Have participants complete the last column on the *Visual Impairment Experiences Chart*, “How would this impact my daily life as an older adult?” Give participants 10 minutes to complete this activity.
2. Go through each of the visual impairments and ask participants to share how they feel each of these conditions would impact their daily life. What could they do to help compensate for it?
3. Now that participants have experienced what it is like to be visually impaired as an older adult, consider what it would be like to work with a geriatric patient in a healthcare setting who has these types of conditions.
  - How would some of these conditions impact daily life for patients living in a nursing home or assisted living facility?
4. If you provide care to older adults experiencing one or more of these conditions, what could you do to be helpful or make things easier for them? Share some of these thoughts with participants. Visual impairment can interfere with daily living significantly. A person can become more dependent. It can lead to inaccuracy in visual-motor coordination, decreased sensitivity to contrast, depth perception is reduced, which can lead to difficulty walking and driving. And further, it could lead to accidents and falls.

